

# Spotlight

on

# DHHS



**Volume 1, Issue 3**

**Employee Newsletter**

**November - December 2004**

## ***Celebrating New Hampshire's Adoptive Families***

At a gathering at the State House on November 9<sup>th</sup>, Commissioner John Stephen and Nancy Rollins, Director of the Division for Children, Youth and Families, (DCYF) were joined by adoptive families in a celebration of November as Adoption Awareness Month in New Hampshire.

At the event, which was held at the Governor's Executive Council Chambers, dozens of children, families and adoption professionals filled the room to hear Commissioner Stephen reiterated the State's commitment to promote adoption.

"All children deserve to be raised in families that love them and have their best interest at heart," said Commissioner Stephen. "For some children, adoption is their best chance for a happy, healthy life and a future of promise."

*Adoption  
Continued on page 8*



*The Lizotte Family joined Commissioner Stephen and DCYF Director Nancy Rollins at the Celebrating New Hampshire's Adoptive Families event*

## ***From the desk of...***



## **Commissioner Stephen**

### ***Holiday Greeting to Staff***



I wanted to take this opportunity to wish all DHHS staff and their families a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season. I also want to say how much I look forward to working with every employee in the New Year. I really can't say enough about all the great things I have seen from and heard about our DHHS folks across the State. I truly hope you all know how much your work means to the people of New Hampshire and me personally.

2004 has been an interesting year for the Department, to say the least. We have seen a reorganization, a plan to reform a program that entails almost 70% of our business, and a budget situation that requires us to maintain a high vacancy rate. It would have been

easy for us to look at this change and make excuses, but we have pulled together to make a positive of the circumstances. I have so much respect for the dedication and resiliency of our staff to adapt to our ever-changing circumstances. Thank you for your help.

I also want to thank all those who have been actively involved in our community outside of the work we do at DHHS. We see parts of the volunteerism and giving back that permeates our Department in activities such as blood drives and collections of food and clothing. But I know that this is only the tip of the iceberg in the commitment of our staff to help those in need. During the holidays, I hope you remember not just those who could use some help, but also the people who work so hard to make their communities a better place.

I hope you take time to think of all the wonderful things that we do as a Department for the citizens of our State. It is important to step back away from the day-to-day minutia and to realize that we are in the people business and what we do affects real people's lives. DHHS was built to be a force for good work across the State and we should take the mandate we have been given to do this work and do it with a sense of appreciation that State has called on us to help others. We should never lose sight of the big picture.

On a personal note, I will be doing like most of you, spending as much time as

*Holiday Greeting  
Continued on page 8*

## NH's Suicide Prevention Plan

In November, Commissioner John A. Stephen announced the State Plan for Suicide Prevention.

The plan, which resulted from legislation passed this year (HB 1397), is a collaborative effort of many organizations including: the Suicide Prevention Partnership, the Youth Suicide Prevention Assembly, the New Hampshire Pediatric Society and our Department.

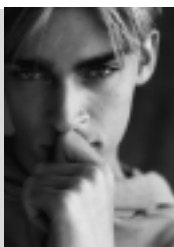
"Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among young people in our State," said Commissioner Stephen. "This plan is a step forward with clear goals and strong leadership across New Hampshire."

The Suicide Prevention Plan contains nine goals that promote awareness and recognition of suicide, develop and coordinate clinical practices, and improve suicide surveillance statewide. Reducing youth suicide is part of the Department's Healthy NH 2010 initiative.

"Our Department has great partners in this effort to reduce youth suicide and their efforts cannot be overstated," added Commissioner Stephen. "We look forward to implementing the recommendations in this plan and continuing efforts in the future that help us prevent suicide. The many groups involved in this endeavor show the significance of this topic."

According to Commissioner Stephen, President Bush signed the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act in October to provide \$82 million nationally to help youths who are at risk of committing suicide. Named after the son of Senator Gordon Smith (R-Oregon) who committed suicide at age 21, the legislation helps identify youths who display signs of mental illness that can lead to suicide. It authorizes \$60 million to be distributed through states and tribes and \$22 million for colleges and universities.

"This is an issue that needs more attention both in New Hampshire and across the country," remarked Commissioner Stephen. "I am grateful for the leadership role our state legislature has taken in this matter."



## On the Work of the Bureau of Child Care Licensing

In New Hampshire, where fierce independence is a hallmark of public pride, service providers sometimes view a state agency responsible for monitoring compliance of standards and rules with skepticism and mistrust. However, the majority of child care providers understand that licensing rules are necessary to ensure safe and healthy environments for children. As Wendy Derhak, Director of Growing Places Center in Durham, New Hampshire, wrote in a letter to the Bureau of Child Care Licensing (BCCL), "I appreciate your role in protecting quality for children. Thank you. You have made a difference in my life and the lives of the many families that we serve."

Currently, seven BCCL licensing coordinators travel the State to conduct routine visits and complaint investigations. Unannounced visits are necessary to ensure safe, healthy environments for children, and, as Peggy Small-Porter, Director of Richie McFarland Children's Center, Stratham, New Hampshire, expressed, "Although the unannounced site visit was a tad stressful due to the many activities our agency was involved with, the licensing coordinator had an incredible talent to put our staff at ease. She set a tone of collaboration and worked hard to partner with us as colleagues to help us meet the requirements in a cooperative yet firm fashion. Thank you for a positive and valuable experience."

On a daily basis, the BCCL's clerical staff works to foster a positive public perception of the Bureau by providing telephone consultation and resources to parents and to child care programs. Licensing Coordinators provide on-site technical assistance for issues including: room arrangement, equipment selection, child development, and age-appropriate activities. They also speak to groups of child care providers and students in training workshops and college classroom settings. As Gale Hall of New Hampshire Technical Institute in Concord wrote to the BCCL, "Thank you so much for speaking to my Organization & Management class. I was thrilled to hear so

many students say that they now realize what a helpful resource licensing will be for them!" Within the Bureau, such words of appreciation from service providers are golden nuggets to be treasured.



## BCCL and LICENSED CHILD CARE in New Hampshire

### Type and Number of Licensed Child Care

Family Child Care Homes	224
Family Group Child Care	128
Child Care Centers	804
Residential Group Homes	40

Number Children Served	46,000
New Applications Annually	300
Average Annual Complaints Handled	350

*Della O'Shea*

*Licensing and Evaluation Coordinator, BCCL*

## Spotlight on DHHS

### Editors

*Kathleen Desmarais, PIO*  
*Nicola Whitley, PIO*

### Liaisons

*Joe Arcidiacono, DCYF*  
*Kevin Connor, BFMA*  
*Jennifer Daniels, BII*  
*Marilyn Doe, BHRM*  
*Andrea Goldsberg, DJJS*  
*Daisy Kahlan, BBH*  
*Margaret Morrill, BEAS*  
*Beth D'Ovidio, DPHS*  
*Lloyd Peterson, OCOM*  
*Wendy Roper, DEA*  
*Michelle Rosado, BDD*  
*Simone Roy, DCYF*  
*Pat Thompson, EAP*



## Department Hosts Epidemiology Conference

From October 13-15, DHHS' Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) hosted the annual Northeast Epidemiology and Laboratory Conference in Meredith. It is held each year by a northeast state, and New Hampshire was this year's site.

"The conference was a great success," said Dr. Jesse Greenblatt, State Epidemiologist. "One hundred and twenty-two epidemiologists and laboratorians from throughout the northeast, as far south as New Jersey and as far north as Quebec, came to share original research and state experiences with communicable and chronic disease issues."

Dr. Lawrence Needham of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gave the opening talk on biomonitoring, and Dr. Tamar Barlam of Boston University gave the evening keynote regarding antibiotic resistance. Signifi-

cantly, many presentations were given by NH Division of Public Health Services staff on chronic disease, infectious disease, and applied epidemiology issues.

"I think all the attendees were particularly impressed with the quality of the agenda and the cutting edge presentations," said Dr. Jose Montero, Chief of DPHS' Communicable Disease Control Section, who, along with Dr. Elizabeth Talbot, Deputy State Epidemiologist, planned the conference. "We really aimed to show the attendees the best of New Hampshire and had a number of people from CDC and other states give positive comment."

The event serves as an opportunity for key epidemiology and laboratory public health officials to discuss important issues of concern. This was evident this year with much discussion about the flu vaccine shortage.

## MEDICAID MODERNIZATION MOVES FORWARD

November marked a significant step forward with Medicaid Modernization. On November 10<sup>th</sup>, Commissioner John A. Stephen and several members of the Medicaid Steering Committee appeared before a special session of the Legislative Fiscal Committee to provide a two-hour presentation on the status of the Department's Medicaid Modernization project. Before a packed room, the Commissioner explained the background and events leading to the need to examine and change the current Medicaid Program, reviewed the major proposals for modernizing the program and then fielded questions from members of the committee. Concurrent with the Fiscal Committee meeting, the Department released its Medicaid Modernization proposals (*GraniteCare*) on its web site for public review and comment.

The Fiscal Committee then met again on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, and voted overwhelmingly (9-1) to authorize the Commissioner to enter into discussions with federal Medicaid officials regarding the proposed changes to Medicaid.

In continuing to keep this an open process, the Department scheduled three pub-

lic comment sessions: all day (9:00 AM – 4:00 PM) at the Brown Building auditorium on December 6; from 3:00 PM – 7:00 PM at Berlin's Technical Institute on December 7; and finally from 3:00 PM – 7:00 PM at the Daniel Webster College in Nashua. This was in addition to the e-mail account set up for public comment on *GraniteCare* and presentations by members of the Steering Committee to a wide variety of stakeholder groups.

The Commissioner and key program members of the Department met with federal Medicaid staff in Washington during December to discuss the *GraniteCare* proposals and to begin identifying which ones require federal approval.

Medicaid Modernization, which began as an idea nine months ago, now has taken shape as *GraniteCare*, a series of far-reaching proposals to change New Hampshire's Medicaid Program into one of the most innovative in the country. While there are many remaining steps in the process, including final federal and State legislative approval, the accomplishments by staff in developing *GraniteCare* have been impressive.

Lloyd Peterson Project Director  
Medicaid Modernization

## Being Physically Active

### Make It Your New Year Resolution

Thirty minutes of moderate-intensity activity, most days of the week, is one of the best things you can do to reach and maintain a healthy weight and to improve your health. Physical activity can help reduce the risk of developing certain chronic diseases, reduce feelings of depression, anxiety, and stress, and help you sleep and feel better.

### Walking is a great way to become more physically active.

If you are interested in beginning a walking program and you have been inactive for a while, start slowly and work up to 30 minutes a day at a pace that is comfortable for you. Begin by moving in small increment of time and make it a daily challenge to find ways to include physical activity. Examples include: taking the stairs instead of the elevator; parking at the far end of the parking lot; getting up from your desk throughout the day to stretch and walk; walking at lunch; replacing television time with a walk a few evenings a week; walking your dog; and planning active weekends!

### Social and peer support help increase your chances of sticking to a program.

Ask a friend, neighbor, or family member to walk with you or try starting or becoming part of a walking group at work or in your neighborhood. Consider using a pedometer, a small device that clips onto your waistband to measure the number of steps walked each day. Begin with your own specific goals and work up to 10,000 steps per day, the equivalent of five miles.

Remember, it's not one particular thing that leads to a healthier lifestyle. It's all the little things you do that will make a difference.

For more information on the health benefits of physical activity or how to add physical activity into daily living, contact the Adult Physical Activity Program in the Nutrition and Health Promotion Section of the Division of Public Health Services at 271-6887.

Stacey Smith, Health Promotion Advisor  
Division of Public Health Services



## In the News



(Pictured left to right)  
Melissa Raymond,  
Kathy O'Neil, and  
Michele Beasley

Congratulations to **Melissa Raymond**, **Kathy O'Neil**, and **Michele Beasley**, Bureau of Child Care Licensing, on receiving the Governor's Incentive Award. Melissa, Kathy, and Michele were recognized for their outstanding work and service, and the excellent support they provide on a daily basis to the child care community in our State.

Keep up the great work!

A warm welcome to **Alyssa Pockell**, who joins the Department as our Legislative Coordinator. Alyssa, a resident of Henniker, was legislative assistant to the House Finance Committee and former Assistant Director of Kids Voting New Hampshire.



**Patrick C. Herlihy** has been appointed Director of the Department's Office of Homeless and Housing Services.

For the past 18 years, Patrick has been working on affordable housing, community development, and economic development projects in New Hampshire. For the past eight years, he managed the Community Development



ment Block Grant program for the State and, most recently, provided consulting services in the areas of training, grant writing, grant administration, and planning for federal community development and associated grant programs. Great to have you aboard, Patrick.

**Karol Dermon**, Medicare Coordinator with the Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services (BEAS), recently received AARP New Hampshire's 2004 Community Partner of the Year award. Karol was honored for her leadership in bringing timely information on the newly enacted Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act to residents across the State.

Karol coordinates education for people with Medicare and their caregivers, as well as for professionals who work in the aging services field. She manages two federal programs - HICEAS and the Senior Medicare Patrol Project.

Said Jo Moncher, BEAS Bureau Chief, "Karol is an outstanding communicator and provides critical education for the people we serve. We are honored to have her on our team."

Congratulations on this well deserved recognition, Karol.

We said farewell to **Mary Anne Broshek** who has retired after 30 years with the Department. Mary Anne served in many capacities during her distinguished career with the State, most recently as Director of the Division of Family Assis-

## Milestones

Welcome to the following individuals who joined DHHS in September and October:

### Janet Brooks

*Building Service Worker II*

### Rhonda Connors

*Registered Nurse II*

### Mamta Dua

*Laboratory Assistant II*

### Faith Duclos

*Clerk Interviewer*

### Judith Gerber

*Sr. Psychiatric Social Worker*

### Josef Hodgkins

*Licensed Practical Nurse I*

### Heather Leyden

*Child Protective Service Worker Trainee*

### Brenda Minot

*Registered Nurse II*

### Linda Ramelli

*Secretary II*

### Maureen Shippee

*Child Protective Service Worker Trainee*

### Vicki Sullivan

*Secretary II*

### Jennifer Tompkins

*Clerk Interviewer*

Farewell and our deepest appreciation for a job well done to the following staff who retired in September and October:

### Patricia Cutting Birthe Filby

tance. With appreciation and gratitude for her dedicated service, we wish Mary Anne the very best in her retirement.



*Mary Anne Broshek*

*In the News  
Continued on page 6*



## WIC Program Celebrates 30 Years



*From left to right: Mary Ann Cooney, Director of the Division of Public Health Services; Bill Zeliff, former US Congressman; Robin Williamson McBrearty, Administrator, Nutrition and Health Promotion Section; Commissioner John A. Stephen; Fran Zorn, Regional Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service, Northeast Region; Ron Vogel, Acting Deputy Administrator, Special Nutrition Programs, USDA Food and Nutrition Service; John Dumais, President NH Grocers Association.*

A Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration was held on October 25<sup>th</sup> at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord. More than 150 people attended and heard a variety of state and national dignitaries and speakers congratulate the WIC Program for its success in improving birth outcomes and the health of families in New Hampshire.

A highlight of the event was the awarding of the Friends of New Hampshire WIC Awards to individuals who have made significant contributions to the success of the WIC Program in New Hampshire. Award recipients were:

**Peg Downing** – Program Coordinator of the New Hampshire Reads AmeriCorps Program,

**John Ghiorzi** – Former Regional Director, Northeast Regional Office, US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service,

**Valerie Long** – Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program Coordinator with UNH Cooperative Extension,

**Paula Oliveira** – Former State WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator and now certified lactation consultant in private practice, and

**Bill Zeliff** – Former US Congressman from New Hampshire.

Twelve state and local agency WIC staff were recognized for their 20 years or more of employment with the WIC Program, including Merrilee Cutter, Robin Williamson McBrearty, Lisa Richards, and Pamala Welcome, from the Nutrition and Health Promotion Section's WIC Program. A special recognition was also given to 13 local agency WIC staff who have recently taken a national examination to become certified lactation counselors.

In addition, Governor Craig Benson designated October as a Celebration of 30 Years of WIC Month in New Hampshire, and a proclamation was issued and read by Commissioner Stephen at the event.

## Nick Toumpas Confirmed as New Deputy Commissioner

Though it may be dating him to say it, Nick Toumpas actually is on his second stint with the Department of Health and Human Services. He previously worked in the Division of Welfare in the late 1970's, and ironically, Dick Chevrefils was the one who hired him.

Since then, Nick has worked in the telecommunications industry for such companies as Lucent Technologies and Digital Equipment Corporation. He also owned his own company for several years.

He rejoined the Department in 2002 as the Administrator of the Bioterrorism Preparedness Program. From there, he moved on to the Commissioner's office where he directed the Reorganization Team.

"I am really excited about this new opportunity," said Nick. "When I was first asked to consider the BT Administrator position it wasn't on my radar screen, but,



the more I thought I about it, the more I thought it would be a great chance to use my background to help make a difference in people's lives. It has been a wonderful experience so far and I have worked with some truly amazing people. I am excited about this new challenge and look forward to serving the people of this great State."

Nick grew up in Concord and attended the University of New Hampshire, where he received his B.S. and an M.B.A. He and his wife have a daughter, Leah, who attends Bishop Brady High School.

His interests include traveling, eating, and anything Greek, especially "My Big Fat Greek Wedding."



## Disaster Relief Service

For two weeks and three days this fall, Ken Roos, Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services (BEAS), served as a Red Cross volunteer disaster responder, delivering food to victims of hurricane Jeanne in the Ft. Pierce area of Florida.

"My ability to help out was due to the generosity of BEAS management and the NH Disaster Leave Act, which allows State Employees trained as Red Cross volunteers up to three weeks leave to respond to major disasters," said Ken.

Three other State employees, including Deb Marsh, Division of Family Assistance, also responded to the relief activities that occurred in the wake of hurricanes that occurred this fall.

# BEAS Update

## Hosting Providers and Partners Meeting

On October 19<sup>th</sup>, the Department's Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services (BEAS) hosted a Community Providers and Partners meeting. The meeting was attended by nearly 100 persons representing organizations that provide services to seniors and adults with chronic illnesses or disabilities.

"This was the first time these providers and partners have come together to hear information and share dialogue with Departmental staff about long term care issues," said Jo Moncher, BEAS Bureau Chief. "BEAS plans to hold these types of meetings two or three times a year. We need to have collaborative relationships with our providers, and we look forward to having a healthy and positive dialogue with them."



*Mr. James Burnett, a caregiver, attended the event and won the floral centerpiece door prize.*



*Linda Wozniak, a caregiver, pictured at the event with Cathy Creapeau, Program Coordinator, NH Family Caregiver Support Program, BEAS, at the event honoring family caregivers in New Hampshire*



## Celebrating New Hampshire's Family Caregivers

Commissioner John A. Stephen was joined by caregivers and their families at a ceremony to honor caregivers that was held at the TLC Adult Medical Day Program in Concord. Also present were BEAS Bureau Chief Jo Moncher and other BEAS staff members, as well as representatives from NH ServiceLink, the NH Alzheimer's Association, Belknap-Merrimack Community Action Program, and Granite Ledges.

"In November, we take time to thank New Hampshire's caregivers for the dedication they display every day of the year," said Commissioner Stephen. "These important individuals play a vital role in our health care system. They make it possible for loved ones to maintain independence and remain in their homes, where most seniors prefer to live."

Reading from a proclamation signed by Governor Craig Benson honoring caregivers, Commissioner Stephen praised the generosity and selfless commitment of individuals who "dedicate their time [and] energy...exhibiting heroic efforts to en-

hance the life of someone they care for at home...[they are] true testaments of love and devotion."

According to the National Caregivers Association, there are more than 121,000 individuals in New Hampshire who provide 130 million hours of care to their loved ones each year. One in every four households is involved in caregiving, providing more than 80% of the care that is given in the home.

"In what can be a very stressful role, caregivers demonstrate extraordinary dedication and courage," said Stephen. "I have said that home and community-based care for seniors is vital to the State, and the people who provide this care deserve tremendous praise."

The NH Family Caregiver Support Program, which is funded under the Older Americans Act and administered by BEAS, assists caregivers by providing information, education, and other supportive services. For more information, call BEAS at 271-4680 or 1-800-351-1888 or NH ServiceLink at 1-866-634-9412.

*Margaret Morrill, Program Specialist III  
BEAS*

### *In the News*

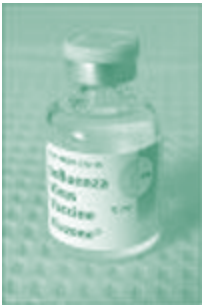
*Continued from page 4*

We welcome Joseph Harding as Director of Alcohol and Drug Policy. For the past five years, Joe served as the Executive Director of Friends of Recovery, New Hampshire. Until recently, he served as the Treasurer of the NH Alcohol and Other Drug Providers Association. He is a former public member of the Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment and has co-chaired the Commission's Public Awareness and Education Task Force for the past four years.

Great to have you with us, Joe!



## FLU VACCINE UPDATE



This flu season, New Hampshire and the country face a shortage of flu vaccine caused by manufacturing problems at one of the distributors that supplies half of the vaccine to the U.S. New

Hampshire has distributed all of the vaccine with wonderful cooperation from all the hospitals in the State.

In response to the shortage, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed revised guidelines on who should receive a flu vaccine this year based on those who are at greatest risk of complications from contracting influenza. The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) had further qualified these groups, and encouraged residents who fit into any of these categories to be immunized against flu this year. The groups as outlined by the CDC were:

- All children 6 to 23 months of age
- All adults 65 years of age or older
- Children 6 months to 18 years of age on chronic aspirin therapy

- Persons aged 2 years to 64 years with underlying chronic medical conditions
- Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- All women who are pregnant during the flu season
- Health care workers involved in direct patient care, and
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children younger than 6 months of age.

Since the flu vaccine supplies in New Hampshire are holding out, DHHS has recommended that doctors and hospitals relax the criteria to pre-shortage recommendations, including anyone over age 50 and anyone with a chronic illness.

Influenza is caused by a virus. While many people become ill every year in the United States, most people recover fully after a few days. Symptoms of the flu can include headache, fatigue, sore throat, body aches, sudden high fever, dry cough, runny or stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. If you get the flu, you should get plenty of rest, drink lots of liquids, and avoid using alcohol and tobacco.

There are important steps everyone should take to prevent getting the flu and

other illnesses, such as colds, that circulate, especially in the winter. These common-sense steps to help avoid getting sick include:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and warm water, especially before eating or preparing food
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and then throw the tissue away; remember to wash your hands
- Wash your hands before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Eat a healthy diet, exercise, and get plenty of sleep
- If you do become ill, stay home from work, school, and errands until you are better.

If you have questions about the flu vaccine, you can contact the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services flu information line at 1-866-273-6453. You can also visit the DHHS website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov) or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).

### ***Department Offers Spanish, Arabic, and Bosnian Translation Services for Medicaid Questions***

The Department's Medicaid Client Services Unit now offers translation services for speakers of Spanish, Arabic, and Bosnian through DHHS' Client Services telephone line. Callers may leave a voice mail message that will then be received by a translator who will return the phone call and assist in a three-way dialogue with our Client Service Staff.

"The Department wants to remove access barriers for those who receive Medicaid," said Commissioner John A. Stephen. "We want to ensure that folks get the right treatment and they may need translation services to achieve this."

In addition, language difficulties can cause people not to seek out appropriate care. For example, an individual with limited English proficiency may go to an

emergency room to obtain medical assistance when more appropriate and cost-effective treatment may be available.

An analysis of data collected from the Department's District Offices, as well as the Office of Minority Health, indicates that Spanish, Arabic, and Bosnian are the top three languages spoken by Medicaid consumers who are not proficient in English. A number of those who speak these languages are recent refugees who have immigrated to New Hampshire from various countries.

"This is an important step in improving access to health care for those who use Medicaid," added Steve Norton, Medicaid Director. "It allows DHHS to provide a better level of service to individuals who reside in our State."

### ***DFA Awarded Another High Performance Bonus***

In October, the US Department of Agriculture awarded the Department's Division of Family Assistance (DFA) Food Stamp Program \$767,833 in high performance bonuses for significantly reducing payment errors, for having one of the lowest error rates nationally, and for being among the fastest in the country in processing food stamp applications.

New Hampshire was only one of two states in the country to receive three bonuses, the other being South Dakota.

"This could not have been possible without the dedication of our DFA staff and I want to commend them," said Commissioner John A. Stephen. "We have made a commitment to customer service and fast, reliable results are our goal. It's great to see the progress we are making in that direction."



## Project Caring DHHS' Food Drive

With the enthusiastic support of Commissioner John A. Stephen, DHHS held a statewide food drive October 19<sup>th</sup> through November 19<sup>th</sup>.

Donation boxes were made available at Hazen Drive, Annex, APS, Brown Building, Dolloff, Main Building, Philbrook Center, Spring Street, and the Thayer Building for aid to the Concord area food pantries. In the four weeks of the drive, 5,400 items were collected and distributed to food pantries in the Concord area.

In addition, donation boxes were made available in each District Office for the support of food pantries in their communities. As word of Project Care spread, staff from other Departments also contributed donations to the drive.

The success of this project was the result of a total team effort. Staff volunteered to be the food drive leaders at each location, picking up and delivering donations to the pantries. Staff shopped especially for the drive, gave food right out of their own cupboards, and donated cash for food purchases.

"DHHS staff often became 'state employees' out of a desire to help others," said Kathy Minaert, project director of the food drive. "It shows in the way we respond to food drives, Operation Santa Claus, blood drives, and the Charitable Campaign. Whenever we are made aware of hardships or a need, we organize an effort to address it."

"The overwhelming response to this drive reflects the generous spirit of our staff," said Commissioner Stephen. "Special thanks to Kathy and all who helped to make Project Care a success."

"One of our staff declared that 'we are awesome'," said Kathy. "I looked awesome up in the dictionary and the meaning includes tremendous, remarkable, amazing, and humbling. Yes, that certainly describes DHHS staff."

*If something comes to life in others  
because of you, then you have made  
an approach to immortality.*

Norman Cousins

*Adoption  
Continued from page 8*

"While the number of adoptions through our Department's Adoption Program has increased 157% over the last six years and the number of available adoptive homes has grown by 25%, we know that there is still work to be done," said Commissioner Stephen. "We must continue to address barriers and challenges that sometimes prevent a smooth placement process from occurring for children awaiting adoption. With our dedicated staff and Adoption Advisory Committee, we will continue to look for the most effective and efficient ways to get children in need of a family placed in adoptive homes in a timely manner."

The Commissioner's Adoption Advisory Committee, which was formed last year, is composed of parents, adopted persons, and experts in the field of adoption who serve as advisors, providing guidance to the Department, key State policy makers and service providers on all issues of adoption.

This past year, the work of the Committee led to the drafting of a legislative bill for Voluntary Mediated Adoption (Open Adoption), which will allow adoptive families and birth parents to enter into voluntary agreements for ongoing contact. It is hoped that this bill will encourage and expedite adoptions when all parties agree that

contact will benefit the child.

Other speakers at the event included Hillsborough County Probate Court Judge Raymond Cloutier and adoptive parents Kathy and Tom Lizotte of Wilton, New Hampshire.

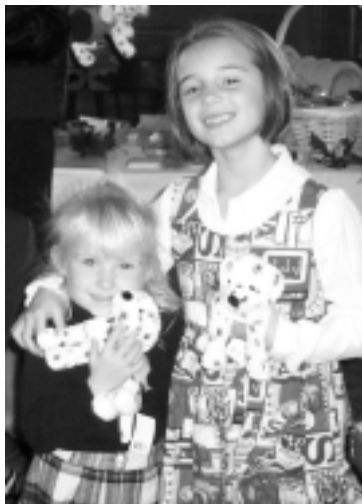
The adopted children were delighted to be given stuffed animals donated by Douglas Toys and Casey Family Services of New Hampshire. There were also toys and other items donated by New Hampshire's Foster and Adoptive Parent Association.

"I am very pleased that we have the opportunity today to

honor and thank the many families in New Hampshire that have opened their hearts and homes to children in need, giving them a nurturing environment in which to grow," said Stephen.

Thanks to Eileen Mullin, Cathy Atkins, Mary Breene, Gail DeGoosh, and Gail Snow for organizing this terrific event.

*DCYF is in need of families willing to make a permanent commitment to older children, especially those between the ages of 8-13. If you are interested in becoming a foster or adoptive parent, please contact DCYF at 1-800-852-3345.*



*Holiday Greeting  
Continued from page 1*

possible with friends and family this holiday season. As a parent of young children, this is time you can never get back. I hope each and every one of you gets the same chance to embrace those close to you.

Happy holidays!

*John A. Stephen*  
John A. Stephen  
Commissioner

**Happy Holidays  
to  
Everyone!**

